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Mr M Rostron
Principal
Greenhead College
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Dear Mr Rostron

Ofsted 2011–12 best practice survey: supporting college students to progress and achieve

Thank you for your warm welcome and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 24 February 2012 to look at your work in supporting students to progress and achieve.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our publication about best practice in supporting college students. The publication will include case studies about individual providers. If your college is included as a case study, you will have an opportunity to comment prior to publication. Individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included scrutiny of documentation and meetings with senior managers, support staff and students.

Features of good practice observed

- A strong ethos is in place where the academic and personal development of the individual student pervades every aspect of the college's work.
- Strong links between pastoral tutors and teachers ensure a comprehensive and ongoing view of students' academic progress. The college's well-embedded processes for target setting and monitoring students' progress are significant factors in enabling students to achieve consistently very high results and consequently offer considerable value for money.
- Highly committed and enthusiastic staff provide extensive pastoral support. Staff give their time very freely, often providing specialist support to students with complex needs and this enables students to stay on their

courses and achieve their potential. Students feel well looked after and say that teachers and tutors always go 'the extra mile' to help them.

- A well-managed and excellent enrichment programme includes an extremely broad range of activities, from competitive and non-competitive team sports to Latin for beginners and from journalism to knitting and crotchet. Students look forward to these opportunities that they say are fun and challenging, and participation helps to motivate them in their academic work.
- The college maintains an outstanding approach to extending students' experience of work and developing their future employability skills through the project and work-placement scheme (PAWS). The college's long-established and very popular voluntary scheme provides opportunities in a large range of work settings.
- Effective peer mentoring by second year A-level students for first year AS students helps develop the skills of the mentors and supports and motivates the AS students.
- Close collaborative partnerships with local and national organisations and stakeholders enhance the students' experience and opportunities for employment. A strong emphasis is put on providing students and parents or carers with good advice and guidance about employment opportunities through, for example, the college's 'Employment and Gap Year' fair.
- An excellent range of support for students' progression includes study support and advice and guidance for students' applications to university. A well-developed and successful programme is in place for students wishing to apply for courses at Oxbridge.
- The college has very high-quality resources and a clear commitment to sustainability in current and future developments in accommodation. Good and improving spaces allow students to relax and socialise in a caring environment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- monitoring carefully and evaluating fully the impact on all aspects of academic and pastoral support as the caseload of personal tutors increases, to ensure that the existing high quality provision is maintained.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop your approaches to providing support for your students. As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Josephine Nowacki
Her Majesty's Inspector